



# GENDER EQUALITY

## UPDATE 17: WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

8 JUNE, 2020



## INTRODUCTION

Unprecedented measures undertaken by governments around the globe to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have had far-reaching ramifications on the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. With 2020 set to mark the 20th anniversary of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325, funds have been reduced due to the emergency response to tackle the pandemic. The WPS agenda applies not only in contexts of armed conflict or post-conflict, but also in constructing the sustainability of peaceful, inclusive, and tolerant societies. Women's leadership is a critical component of any conflict prevention and sustainable peace initiative, and must be strengthened to respond effectively to this pandemic.

The differential impacts of COVID-19 on conflict-affected women survivors, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), survivors of rape and women with disabilities, have been immense. With Nepal under lockdown, income sources of conflict affected women have dwindled, with a majority of them resorting to food relief that often does not cover their basic needs and the needs of their families. This predicament has been further compounded by the lack of access to medical treatment and judicial remedies. To respond to these challenging circumstances, some women's groups, such as the Conflict Victims Women National Network, have established an emergency relief fund to provide much needed supplies to affected women in their network.

Closures and lockdowns announced by the government have directly affected judicial mechanisms that protect and uphold the rights of citizens. The partial or complete shutdown of courts have hindered victims/survivors of violence to file cases, furthering impunity and negatively affecting the psychosocial well-being of women. Cases of violence can be registered with the police, National Women's Commission, local level governments and the court. However, the court



Photo: UN Women

has the sole authority to uphold justice, whereas the remaining three institutions are limited to negotiating settlements between the conflicting parties.

There have been numerous instances of domestic violence including cases of women who have been forced to leave their homes after facing domestic violence. Under normal circumstances, an interim protection order issued by courts under the Domestic Violence Act could protect victims from their perpetrators. However, due to the limited functioning of the courts, women are unable to access these protection measures. Civil society organizations are stressing the urgent need to amend laws and policies to take the current COVID-19 context and related challenges into account.

The Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on WPS on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Source: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325(2000))

**“Women are the best drivers of growth, the best hope for reconciliation in conflict and the best buffer against the radicalization of youth and the repetition of cycles of violence.”**

*Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director*

## GLIMPSES: NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP) PHASE-I AND II

Nepal was the first country in South Asia and the second in Asia, to adopt a NAP on WPS in February 2011. Nepal's NAP Phase-I (2011-2016) is seen as a global best practice. It was developed through a transparent, inclusive and participatory process and is considered to be one of the most widely consulted process globally. When the NAP Phase-I was concluded in 2016, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction as well as the 1325 Action Group and UN agencies undertook a Desk Review<sup>1</sup> which reflected the achievements and gaps, leading to a decision to initiate the second phase<sup>2</sup> to ensure that the Government of Nepal would meet its obligations under UNSCR 1325, 1820 and the subsequent resolutions.

## TIMELINE: NAP PHASE-II

- OCTOBER 2018** : Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Working Group of the International Development Partners Group (IDPG) sends a letter to the Office of the Prime Minister & Council of Ministers, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) to appoint a Host Agency responsible for the WPS agenda.
- MARCH 2019** : Government appoints MoHA as the Host Agency responsible for finalizing NAP-Phase II.
- AUGUST 2019** : Consultations between MoHA and the UN on finalizing the NAP Phase-II.
- OCT - DEC 2019** : Consultations with local and provincial governments, victims' groups and civil society.
- DEC - JAN 2020** : Consolidation of recommendations emerging from provincial and local consultations.
- JANUARY 2020** : Presentation of findings to high-level government officials.
- JANUARY 2020** : Validation workshop with government and civil society representatives.
- FEBRUARY 2020** : NAP Phase-II submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement.

<sup>1</sup> [https://saathi.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Desk-Review-Report\\_NAP.pdf](https://saathi.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Desk-Review-Report_NAP.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.moha.gov.np/en/post/second-national-action-plan-nap-ii-preliminary-draft>

## GIHA TASK TEAM MEETING, 11 MAY 2020



Photo: UN Women

### EMERGING ISSUES

#### Conflict-affected women survivors

- » Despite advocacy efforts from conflict-affected women survivors, local governments have been silent on meeting their needs.
- » The lockdown has had an adverse effect on the sources of income of conflict-affected women survivors. They have been unable to access medical treatment and some unable to recharge their phones to stay in contact with their families, friends and peers. Many of them who are also daily wage earners are finding it difficult to make ends meet.
- » There are no separate provisions for conflict-affected women survivors in the relief package. Conflict-affected women survivors have not been able to access relief due to the lack of citizenship papers.
- » Local governments may not be aware that conflict-affected women reside within their jurisdictions due to stigma in the community and lack of support mechanisms.

#### Civil Society Organizations<sup>3</sup>

- » The current crisis will delay the finalization of NAP Phase-II, due to the government's focus on the COVID-19 response.
- » Since the announcement of the peace process, funds for peacebuilding initiatives have decreased.
- » Communal harmony is being impacted, with the rise in hate speech in districts like Siraha and Saptari. People are refraining to

buy commodities from shops owned by the Muslim community. This has led to the erosion of social ties and fabric between individuals and communities. Similar dynamics have been witnessed between the residents of the Kathmandu Valley and returning migrants.

### Recommendations

#### Conflict-affected women survivors

- » The Conflict Victims Women National Network urges the government to ensure access to relief and support to conflict-affected women survivors, including medical treatment and psychosocial counseling.
- » The government should take immediate steps to address domestic violence.

#### Civil Society Organizations

- » Civil society organizations call for the immediate approval of NAP Phase-II to address the challenges faced by conflict-affected women survivors.
- » The current situation requires an analysis of the impacts on prevailing gender norms.
- » Safe spaces, such as community centres and shelter homes, should be made accessible to conflict-affected women survivors.
- » Women should be actively engaged to promote social harmony during this crisis.
- » Relief programmes should accommodate economic empowerment, medical and psychosocial support initiatives. Survivor-centric measures should be implemented by the local governments, as they are providing relief to vulnerable populations.
- » Storytelling and inter-generational dialogues should be used to create an enabling environment for conflict-affected women survivors, and especially for women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, to speak up.

<sup>3</sup>Nagarik Aawaj and The Story Kitchen

## UPDATE FROM MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS ON NAP PHASE-II

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) has received final feedback on NAP Phase-II from the Cabinet of Ministers, and the inputs are currently being incorporated. At this stage, additional suggestions may be integrated from sources such as the Gender in Humanitarian Action Task Team. Once the NAP Phase-II has been endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers, it will be sent to MoHA for implementation. MoHA hopes that this implementation of NAP Phase-II shall ensure timely benefits to conflict-affected women survivors in the wake of the current COVID-19 crisis.

## INTERVIEW WITH MS. BANDANA RANA, VICE CHAIR, UN CEDAW COMMITTEE

**T**he government will need to gather information on the number of women who are stuck at the border and those who are kept in quarantine sites. They will need to enquire whether women have access to measures that ensure dignity, adequate space, respect and food security. Thus, we need to continue advocating on the safety, security and different needs of women at the border.

While responding to the pandemic, the focus must be on access to additional finance, food security and health services for the most vulnerable groups. These groups should include migrants, single women-headed households, elderly, persons with disabilities, survivors of violence and unpaid care workers. Risk assessments and data collection are important for identifying women at risk.

The capacity of shelters and hospitals to provide relevant support, such as isolated spaces and food, to survivors of violence, is limited. Protective measures and guidelines to address inadequacies should be developed to capacitate frontline workers to help victims of violence.

Stronger coordination between federal and local governments will enhance effective pandemic response.

For rural women, community radios are most effective in the dissemination of information about the COVID-19 pandemic. These messages must be

simple, relevant and tailored to those without a phone and social media access.

Increasing investments in women's health, economic security, and leadership in response and recovery decisions, as well as scaling up resources for essential services for survivors of violence are important to guaranteeing women's rights while tackling the COVID-19 crisis.

From the CEDAW perspective, the lockdown will further limit women's access to health, education, employment and increase risk of gender based violence, especially for marginalized women. State parties to the CEDAW convention have the obligation to ensure that the measures taken in response to the pandemic should not discriminate based on gender, and that those measures are guided by human rights principles. New assessments and past experiences have shown that violence increases when women and children are confined in small spaces with abusive partners. As a majority of women engaged in the informal work sector are responsible for unpaid care work, chances of them being left without any savings and thus protection from future contingencies increase exponentially. Based on past experiences, there is a high probability that these women face vulnerabilities including sexual exploitation, unemployment and other impacts. Therefore, it is critical to adopt a gender lens in the COVID-19 preparedness and response.

## KEY DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

1. A Global Study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)
2. Guidance note on CEDAW and COVID-19: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CEDAW/STA/9156&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CEDAW/STA/9156&Lang=en)
3. Women, Peace and Security and COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific: <https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/publication/UNWOMEN-ap-wps-covid-in-asia-pacific-2020.pdf>
4. Draft NAP Phase-II: <http://moha.gov.np/en/post/second-national-action-plan-nap-ii-preliminary-draft>
5. Timeline: 15 Years of Women, Peace and Security: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2015/10/timeline-15-years-women-peace-security>

This Gender and Equality Update has been consolidated by UN Women on behalf of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Task Team (GIHA TT). The Task Team is chaired by UN Women and organized in close cooperation with the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MOWCSC), Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations that includes diverse women and excluded groups and their wider networks.

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